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ABSTRACT

Both the Department of Education (ED) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) support a wide variety of studies of systemic and other educational reform in science, mathematics, and technology. Many of the studies have common or complementary purposes. To provide more comprehensive knowledge as a basis for decision making and to manage resources more efficiently, it is imperative that evaluation efforts be coordinated. The kinds of evaluations that will benefit most from collaboration between NSF and ED include major program evaluations that may affect federal policy or guidance to the field; curriculum assessments; and assessments of trends in educational reform in mathematics, science, and technology. Collaboration also should focus on research that adds to the growing knowledge base on systemic educational reform in mathematics, science, and technology. Both NSF and ED are designing indicator systems to track the effectiveness of educational reform efforts. Whenever possible, indicators should be the same. The use of common data collection elements and performance indicators will produce a more comprehensive knowledge base and reduce reporting burdens. Both agencies agree to discuss their evaluation plans and share information, addressing collaboration explicitly, and keeping each other informed. Synthesizing knowledge, collaborating on projects, and delivering a consistent message of commitment to collaboration will ensure that cooperative efforts are fruitful. The pamphlet lists the five members of the ED-NSF Memorandum of Understanding Working Group and the six members of the Task Group on Collaboration on Evaluation. (SLD)

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Principles for Collaboration on Evaluation

An Agreement Between the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education

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Principles for Collaboration on Evaluation: An Agreement Between the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education

Why Are We Committed to Collaboration?

Both the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) support a wide range of studies of systemic and other educational reform in science, mathematics, and technology. Among these are studies of curriculum development, professional development, instruction, student assessment, and technical assistance and other support systems. Many of the studies have common or complementary purposes. To provide more comprehensive knowledge as a basis for decision making and to manage our resources efficiently, it is imperative that we coordinate our evaluation efforts.

In recent years, initiation of programs to support systemic educational reform has added new dimensions to the agencies' efforts. State, local, urban, and rural systemic initiatives funded by NSF call for wide-ranging reforms on a large scale. ED supports comprehensive reform at the elementary and secondary levels under the Educate America: Goals 2000 Act. In addition, ED supports many comprehensive reform activities under the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, including a broadened Eisenhower Professional Development Program and schoolwide and targeted assistance strategies for disadvantaged students under Title I, as well as through programs supported by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). Given the nature of these reform efforts, the need for NSF and ED to develop a comprehensive perspective and to collaborate on evaluation is greater than ever.

On Which Activities Do We Need To Collaborate?

The kinds of evaluation activities that will benefit most from collaboration between NSF and ED include major program evaluations that may affect federal policy or guidance to the field, curriculum assessments that have the potential for stimulating multi-state or national dialogue, and assessments of trends in educational reform in math, science, and technology that have national policy implications. Collaboration efforts also should focus on research that adds to the growing knowledge base on systemic educational reform in math, science, and technology.

In addition, both NSF and ED are designing indicator systems to track the effectiveness of educational reform efforts in math, science, and technology. Whenever possible, indicators should be the same, whether the reform efforts are funded by NSF or by ED. Collaboration will help identify common data collection elements and performance indicators to measure progress toward meeting the challenging goals of improving practice and performance. The use of common data collection elements and performance indicators will provide a more comprehensive knowledge base and will reduce the reporting burden for the field.

What Is the Nature of Our Collaboration?

Despite common purposes, in the past ED and NSF have usually planned and carried out studies independently of each other. To enhance collaboration among the two agencies and make their collective evaluation efforts as productive as possible, both agencies agree to

- discuss evaluation plans and concepts when they are in a formative stage;
- promptly share information on new developments or changes in evaluation plans;
- address collaboration explicitly in request for proposals—in statements of work, criteria to assess proposals, and instructions to offerors;
- keep each other informed of evaluation developments on a current basis and consider together their implications for policy and practice by
  - inviting each other's representatives to contractor meetings, as appropriate;
  - conducting joint briefings; and
  - sharing drafts for review and comment promptly prior to formal approval and dissemination.
- synthesize knowledge collectively across studies;
- collaborate on evaluations and explore opportunities for joint evaluation projects;
- jointly disseminate evaluation findings and related knowledge to the field;
- collaborate on the development of indicators to track the effectiveness of educational reform efforts; and
- deliver a consistent message to other federal agencies, states, contractors, and grantees that we are committed to collaborating on evaluation and that it is in everyone's interest to participate.

In some cases, NSF and ED will conduct joint evaluation activities. In other cases, where NSF and ED are conducting separate studies or funding different projects in the same educational arena, the two agencies will collaborate, to the extent possible, on the study design, sampling plan, and types of data to collect, as well as on formats for data collection, analysis, and reporting. This collaborative effort will allow for more widespread comparisons and evaluative statements across educational reform efforts.

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